

III. COMMUNITY FOCAL POINTS

III.A. HARBOR AND WATERFRONT

Gloucester's commercial harbor and waterfront are the foundation of its history, economy, and culture. Gloucester's unique character relies on an enjoyable, accessible, and productive harbor and waterfront.

Critical to the future of these resources is responsible use, management, and development. This section addresses two distinct areas of the harbor and waterfront - the maritime industrial harbor, which is highly regulated by the City Marine Industrial District zoning requirements and state Designated Port Area regulations, and the remainder of the waterfront, where use is less restricted.



This plan builds upon the vision expressed in the 1999 Gloucester Harbor Master Plan, a detailed evaluation and proactive plan to improve and maintain the inner harbor. This 2001 Comprehensive Plan recommends further actions necessary to implement

the Harbor Plan in the larger context of the City's other needs. It also addresses other waterfront areas and issues of accessibility and quality that are fundamental to the future of the city, many of them under jurisdiction of the Gloucester Waterways Board.

III.A.1. RESOURCES AND TRENDS

The centerpiece of Gloucester's waterfront has always been its inner harbor. Protected from Atlantic storms, it is a natural haven close to some of the most productive fishing grounds in the world. Fishing fleets filled the harbor and created the wealth that built the land-side community. Up until about the last 20 years, the commercial fishing industry dominated the activity of the inner harbor, with the wharves and piers providing off-loading and handling of fish, marine supply, repair and other support services. At scattered locations, non-water dependent uses also occupied a place along the harbor.

In the last two decades, however, the fishing industry has undergone dramatic changes, leading to a decline in some fishing-related activities and a shift in harbor use patterns. Fishing remains a key part of



the harbor's identity and surrounding land use, providing supply, docking, off-loading handling, fish processing, and shipping accommodations. The inner harbor today consists largely of marine-related industries, such as docking of whale watch boats, vessel repair, commercial vessels marina businesses and moored vessels. Non-marine dependent businesses along the harbor, including a few restaurants and retail outlets, continue. Recent changes include an expansion in facilities at the Jodrey State Pier and an increasing demand for a wider range of use.

To this end, the Harbor Master Plan documents economic trends, land and water use conditions, and reviews the extensive framework of federal, state and local regulations. Specifically, it reviews the standards of local zoning and state "Chapter 91" regulations that emphasize the priority of water-dependent uses within the inner harbor.

Chapter 91 is of particular importance in planning for the future of the harbor since the state, which has jurisdiction over the waterways and the water edge, has designated Gloucester's inner harbor as a Designated Port Area. This designation ensures that maritime industrial uses will be protected and enhanced, and limits inclusion of other uses.

The Harbor Plan endorsed the continued use of the harbor for a mix of uses that include and are compatible with maritime industry. It recognized that the harbor must serve many sectors of the economy, yet that the physical and institutional infrastructure is not adequate to support its full and effective use. The Plan contains many recommendations of relevance to comprehensive planning for the entire city, including the following directives:

- Upgrade public infrastructure in the harbor;
- Strengthen the traditional port by creating a new private Gloucester Harbor partnership organization that will assist small business on historic finger piers. (Revitalization of the Gloucester Redevelopment Authority is contemplated to support this effort);
- Develop a Maritime Heritage Center;
- Attract private investment into the downtown area.

The Annisquam River is important to Gloucester's unique coastal character. The tidal river and its tributaries provide a highly valued environment linked to its ecology. The shellfish beds, for example, are vital and irreplaceable resources that require protection. The wetlands along its edges are more than picturesque; they play a key role in the sensitive coastal ecology.

At the same time, the River and the coves along its edges serve a large recreational boating population with many marinas and moorings. Classified as a navigable waterway, the Annisquam connects the interior of Gloucester to the ocean. Therefore, maintaining the channel is a consistent issue to address.



Other issues along the Annisquam are the same as those along the entire coastal edge of the City. Landside demand competes for the water's edge and creates a need for planning everywhere. For example, although some open space remains near these private places, residential uses have colonized the water's edge in many locations. Beaches and parks are major attractions, but do not have management plans or improvement programs to guide their future. Marina uses need parking and service areas that fill valued space along the water's edge. Water-dependent uses must be at the water's edge, which then compete with commercial uses that hope to attract business by taking advantage of the views and proximity to the coastline.

In the midst of this, the public retains certain access rights and could benefit from even more. The means and location of access, however, has yet to be fully defined, a mission of the Waterways Board.

The City is faced with many choices and opportunities to improve the future of its harbor and waterfront, maintaining landmarks and seeking the best use of properties. The public cares about these choices, and hopes to be consulted in establishing consistent priorities.

III.A.2. GOAL

Protect, maintain and invest in the harbors, coves, riverfront and waterfront of Gloucester to serve the uses and environments that are essential to the image and economy of the city.

III.A.3. OBJECTIVES

- Continue to implement recommendations of the Gloucester Harbor Plan and integrate its conclusions into planning for related areas and actions.
- Strengthen Gloucester's traditional port activities within the inner harbor, by working with private owners to upgrade facilities, promote diversification, and facilitate investment.
- Promote public investment that will preserve and revitalize the inner harbor.
- Establish a clear process for determining uses of special locations along the harbor and waterfront, and take subsequent actions to promote appropriate redevelopment in the public interest, recognizing the historic mixed use of the inner harbor and support the economic viability of the businesses that depend on it.

- Rebuild harbor infrastructure through dredging, improvements at public landings, seawall reconstruction and repair, and maintaining the roadway network that feeds the harbor edge.
- Increase public access and views within the inner harbor and along the waterfront wherever practical and compatible with its marine industrial uses.
- Protect and develop historical and cultural assets along the harbor and waterfronts of Gloucester.
- Identify areas appropriate for mooring recreational boats, in balance with commercial fishing, shellfishing, lobstering and other public uses.

III.A.4. STRATEGIES

Strategy 1. Support the recommendations of Gloucester's Harbor Plans.

The 1999 Harbor Master Plan presents practical approaches to meet current needs and to position the harborfront and its users for productive future development. It outlines a program of specific projects and broad initiatives to meet the three main goals of the plan:

- Rebuild the Harbor infrastructure.
- Strengthen the traditional port.
- Develop historic and cultural assets.

Through the Harbor Plan Implementation Committee, the City should continue to implement the recommendations of the Harbor Master Plan as part of this Plan.

In addition, the City's 1993 Harbor Plan remains in effect, and its recommendations should be consulted as part of overall planning strategy. The 1993 Harbor Plan established policies and recommended programs and facility improvements that are not yet fully accomplished. These responsibilities should remain primarily under the jurisdiction of the Waterways Board and the Office of the Harbormaster.

Strategy 2. Promote economic development along Gloucester Harbor.

Economic development along the harbor should be expanded and promoted to ensure that the waterfront remains an active and productive contributor to the local economy. The City Economic Plan should consult existing businesses and seek to attract innovative waterfront

businesses that meet city and state regulations. The Community Development Department should assist desirable proposals in meeting regulatory requirements. The Economic Plan should encourage value-added product development and collaborative research and marketing efforts, including aquaculture.

The City can also help to support high quality jobs by encouraging job training for marine related disciplines in local and regional educational institutions and organizations. Educational programs should be used to expand an array of skills ranging from practices in the modern seafood industry, to boat building and restoration, to marine science and biotechnology.

Community Initiatives: Supporting Maritime Skills and Jobs

The International Yacht Restoration School in Newport Rhode Island is an example from another community of an educational program supporting maintenance of maritime industries and skills. This program provides practical training in the complex art of using traditional and modern technologies to restore historic craft that are highly prized today.

Strategy 3. Identify harbor and waterfront parcels and places that have special qualities and features and develop a process to determine their preservation, development or redevelopment.

Several private parcels of land may be redeveloped in the future, and City policies toward these parcels have not been defined. The City should first develop a clear process for determining the public interest in these properties. The City should, then, actively support preferred redevelopment by assisting in locating public funds to support redevelopment and by requesting proposals that meet its policy goals. The Community Development Plan 2000 process identified "retaining views of the harbor" and "providing waterfront access" as actions that would improve the quality of life. The City should respond to these preferences by insisting that development of these properties enhance these qualities and features, rather than detract from them.

Public Interest and Public Action: Steps towards a Better Harbor

One example of the positive direction that might be taken in the redevelopment of waterfront parcels has been the acquisition of the Gloucester Marine Railways on Harbor Loop by the Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center. This institution will be able to promote reuse of the site that enhances the traditional values and appreciation of Gloucester's harbor.

Strategy 4. Improve the infrastructure that serves the harbor and the waterfront by making public investment in these areas a high priority.

The Harbor Plan lists many specific improvements to the harbor infrastructure that should be accomplished in order to promote its economic success. The City, through the Community Development Department, the Department of Public Works, and the Waterways Board should raise these proposals to a high level of priority as it seeks and assigns federal, state and local funds for projects.

For example, the Harbor Plan provides specific recommendations for improving circulation and access to and along the waterfront. The Downtown and Transportation sections of this Plan also support transportation improvements that would promote economic development and a higher quality of life. In order to realize the compounded opportunities brought by transportation improvements, the recommendations from the 1992 Gillham and Gander Report, the Façade Improvement Program, and the 2000 Traffic Circulation Study should be followed. The Community Development Department and the Capital Improvements Advisory Board should then create a single, coordinated program of improvements with targeted resources and a planned time frame for implementation.

Increased vessel and vehicle uses have resulted in both land and water traffic congestion at the state operated and managed Blynman Bridge. This is an acute problem, especially during special events and summer days when either many boaters are passing through the Blynman Canal or many vehicles are crossing the Blynman Bridge, or a combination of both situations. The City should urge a management plan, including scheduled bridge openings for boaters and signage for motorists to ease congestion caused by bridge openings, as recommended in the Harbor Master Plan. In the long term, redesign or replacement of the bridge should be evaluated.

Strategy 5. Complete a waterfront and harbor public access plan for the entire coastal edge.

A list of preferred access locations along the coastal edge should be included in the Open Space Plan. In some cases, access will be expanded through improvements in existing public landings through effort of the Waterways Board. In other cases, public access may be provided adjacent to private property as part of the Chapter 91 licensing and permit process, in keeping with the public rights and policies associated with the Commonwealth's interest in tidelands. The City, through the Waterways Board, the Harbormaster and the Planning Board should work with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Chapter 91 Licensing process to ensure that public access requirements placed on private waterfront development provide the greatest possible public benefit, consistent with regulatory requirements. In other cases, access planning may call for new acquisitions of property or access rights to further the public use and enjoyment of this resource.

Access planning should include visual access to the water in some locations. Visual corridors should be identified, preserved, and linked to land use guidelines or other implementing measures.

Strategy 6. Use the Arts and Cultural Strategy to define specific places and cultural links that should be celebrated through interpretation, artwork and events.

The history and the culture of the harbor and waterfront are central to the identity of Gloucester, and should be emphasized in the arts and cultural strategy recommended in this Plan. The City should use the state's Chapter 91 licensing process to advocate inclusion of interpretation, artwork, or provision for special events as part of new developments along the harbor and other waterfront locations. This is an excellent method to help fulfill public obligations in ways that are unique and meaningful to Gloucester.

Strategy 7. Improve public boating access opportunities along the waterfront.

The Office of the Harbormaster and Waterways Board currently manage the City's public access facilities, ranging from small, unimproved public landings with little or no parking accommodations and where use is limited by the tides, to the major regional boat launching facility at Dunfudgin Landing. The Waterways Board should aggressively pursue the ongoing effort to improve parking facilities, ramps and floats at the landings where appropriate, and continue efforts to address encroachment that infringes on the public's rights.

III.B. DOWNTOWN

Busy Downtown Gloucester, adjacent to Gloucester Harbor, reflects the commercial history of the city, from late Federal brick and solid Victorian buildings, with varied uses, to working wharves, and a lumberyard and the Coast Guard Station at the water's edge.

Residents and visitors like to be in the downtown, doing business or just walking. Traffic is sometimes heavy, and parking is often tight. It is truly a mixed-use district, with retail and commercial services, the Post Office and City Hall, library, social institutions, and a new generation of residents and businesses. Despite long-standing public and private effort to upgrade buildings and amenities to keep downtown and Main Street commercially alive, the area requires continued attention and investment. Much of downtown remains underused; some public and private properties are in relatively poor condition. The future offers continued opportunity for upgrading and face-lifting.



III.B.1 RESOURCES AND TRENDS

Downtown can be generally defined as the area inside Route 128, from Grant Circle Rotary to Fort Square, along 'the Boulevard', to the intersection of Main Street and East Main Street, and back to Grant circle. It includes an active civic center and is fundamentally linked to the harbor - physically, economically and historically.

City land use maps reveal a patchwork pattern of interwoven uses in this district, with clusters of similar uses along the meandering, yet linking, streets. Downtown is densely developed and densely populated, by any measure. With only about 5 percent of the city's land area, it is home to nearly 22 percent of the population, in a combination of single family and multi-family housing units. Zoning includes the R4 designation, the city's highest residential density, allowing up to 5 units per 5,000 square-foot lot, and makes up about half of the land in the downtown area. Architecture is primarily vernacular, with simple lines and peaked roofs.



At the same time, the downtown area supports almost half of the largest employers - Gorton's with over 250 employees, Shaw Markets, Gloucester High School, Fuller School, Strong Leather, and the YMCA contribute substantially to the employment base. These figures reveal the array of businesses and institutions located here; retail, office, restaurants - from European bistros to traditional seafood - industry, institutions and government are all well represented.

Variety makes downtown inviting. The West End of Main Street, featuring wonderfully restored brick buildings and sidewalks and period lighting, with occa-

sional open spaces and side-streets, provides a pedestrian-friendly walkway. The central section has been enlivened with building façade improvements, planters, benches, and trees. The East End, however, has little "street furniture", is too wide in places, needs sidewalk and lighting improvements, and generally feels less hospitable. Rogers Street, which runs parallel to Main Street, is wide and unfriendly to pedestrians, with few amenities and heavy large truck traffic and parking. Many recommendations from the 1992 "Gillham & Gander Streetscape Study", a downtown improvement plan, remain to be completed; these would extend pedestrian amenities to Rogers Street and the length of Main Street.

As true of most busy commercial districts, parking and traffic are concerns, and downtown and the civic center depend on a well-orchestrated system for both. These issues are discussed in the Transportation section of this Plan.

The City has long recognized that the downtown needs special support because of the economic and physical challenges it faces. Although many improvements have made downtown more pleasant and efficient, the work is not complete. The Downtown Development Commission (DDC) has lead responsibility for working in concert with City agencies, businesses and institutions. Together, they should expand their stewardship in order to maintain the community vision of a diverse and busy downtown.



III.B.2. GOAL

Make Downtown Gloucester the center of the commercial and civic life of the city, with a variety and vitality of uses and attractiveness of historic buildings, pleasant streetscapes and connections to the harbor.

III.B.3. OBJECTIVES

- Accomplish consistent and progressive steps to enhance the visual quality and vitality of the Downtown, through the Downtown Development Commission and a centrally managed process.
- Secure funding and implementation of a range of improvements, including public restrooms and completion of the sidewalk and streetscape improvement program.
- Revitalize the East End of downtown.

- Keep downtown clean of trash and litter.
- Maintain diversity of downtown services that attract residents and visitors.
- Expand opportunities for both market and affordable housing in the downtown, including use of space above street level businesses.
- Establish design guidelines and review processes for new development, additions, and restorations.
- Implement a comprehensive traffic and parking management strategy, including public transit improvements.
- Improve signage to destinations, attractions, and parking areas.

III.B.4. STRATEGIES

Strategy I. Establish clear stewardship responsibilities for the Downtown, and provide the resources to fulfill them.

Gloucester's downtown, perched at the edge of the harbor, embodies the positive qualities of a commercial and civic center, where public and private uses are concentrated to create a high level of activity and special identity. Gloucester has maintained the historic character and vitality of its downtown, yet has a list of improvements and visions yet to be accomplished. Unlike in the past, the quality of the downtown environment cannot be sustained through market forces and isolated public investment; it needs constant stewardship to coordinate public and private investments and programs to ensure a positive future.

City leadership, the Community Development Department and business community must establish a clear allocation of responsibility and dedicate resources to the ongoing stewardship of the Downtown, through the Downtown Development Commission (DDC), with assistance from the Grants Office and the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce. The DDC needs a renewed formal charge and direction for program initiatives, an infusion of resources to design and implement plans, and supportive and energetic participation of business and community leaders. The mission of the DDC is broad, as follows:

"It shall be the mission of the downtown development commission to encourage economic revitalization within a context of historic preservation, community involvement and activities, a strong identity and tourism. The commission shall undertake, but not be limited to, the following activities:

- Examine and evaluate conditions on an ongoing basis.
- Propose and promote physical improvements.
- Coordinate public and private efforts.
- Encourage, in cooperation with the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, a creative marketing plan, coordinated advertising, promotions and special events.
- Promote establishment of new business.
- Encourage the establishment of special committees, composed of municipal officials, bankers, merchants, industrialists, preservationists, chamber of commerce officials, downtown residents, design professionals, developers, real estate brokers, and others concerned with downtown.
- Promote and encourage the proper mix of goods, services, housing, recreation and entertainment.
- Coordinate, through the community development department, the activities related to downtown of the historical commission, the historic district commission, the waterways board, the planning board, the tourism commission, the economic development and industrial corporation, the redevelopment authority, and the housing authority."

Strategy 2. Complete physical improvements to the Downtown through a coordinated effort to secure funding, finalize designs and implement recommended changes.

Physical improvements are needed Downtown to enhance it as a place to work, visit and live. Downtown should provide interesting streets, with well-kept streetscape and the varied uses that line the sidewalks. It should express the historic heritage of Gloucester through preservation and restoration of its architecture. The district should be animated by activity, as the venue for delightful public events and art displays. The adjacent civic center is a pleasant place for the Library, museums, YMCA, City Hall and other resources. Downtown should be linked to the sea through attractive sidewalks and views to the Harbor.

Many of these improvements have been suggested in earlier plans and studies, including the streetscape program in the 1992 report by Gillham & Gander and the 1997 Downtown Vision process. Other improvements are linked to recommendations within this Plan: pedestrian and parking improvements, historic preservation, and improved harbor access. The DDC, assisted by the Community Development Department and the Department of Public Works, in cooperation with the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, should review potential

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improvements and prepare a program to design, fund, and implement a coordinated set of changes, to include the following:

- Direct available state and local resources to already planned streetscape and landscape improvements as recommended by the 1992 Gillham and Gander Report, including completion of handicapped access accommodations.
- Continue the building and Façade Improvement Program, administered by the Grants Office.
- Maintain and improve visual and pedestrian links to the harbor and to the civic center, reinforced by streetscape improvements.
- Clean up and maintain streets and sidewalks, routinely, with well-coordinated plans.
- Provide public restrooms in convenient locations, with easily understood directional signage.

The Downtown Development Commission should prioritize recommendations, actions and grants to improve the east end of the downtown. This end of downtown lags behind other areas in development, condition of the streets and sidewalks, buildings and parking areas. Public investment may stimulate private initiatives to improve the area.

Strategy 3. Create and manage ongoing programs to improve the image and market the Downtown.

There is more to a vital downtown than "bricks and mortar". The following promotion and maintenance program should provide for a consistent and high quality image, through cooperative stewardship:

- Support business-based programs for special events and seasonally marketed programs.
- Promote downtown to Gloucester visitors, improving market vitality.
- Clean up and maintain the streets and sidewalks, providing trash receptacles and routinely removing trash and litter.
- Market downtown to prospective businesses to fill vacant storefronts and office space.

Strategy 4. Encourage mixed use of commercial and residential properties.

Downtown Gloucester is well suited to the preferences of an increasing number of people at all income levels who elect to live in urban locations. Downtown and the entire city will benefit from new development that uses second and third floor space to create a mix of commercial and residential uses, including artists' live/work spaces, and contributes to the sense of activity and security on the street.

Furthermore, several buildings on Main Street, and the adjacent commercial areas, are single-story and provide an opportunity to add height and space for residential and/or commercial use.

Strategy 5. Develop a Site Plan and Design Review process.

The economic future of downtown is linked to quality and character of design. More so than in any other part of the city, unattractive buildings and poorly planned and uncoordinated sites detract from the appearance and function of the entire district and discourage investment in neighboring properties.

A common-sense strategy for the mutual benefit of all property owners, as well as the city-as-a-whole, is to develop design guidelines and a review process to support a consistent quality of development and protect historic character. Design guidelines should be developed in concert with the district-based planning discussed in the Villages and Neighborhoods, Section III. C, element of this Plan. This review process that protects historic character and connections to the Harbor and the Civic Center should include the DDC, downtown business and property owners, design professionals, Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, and appropriate departments in City Administration.

Strategy 6. Coordinate efforts with the Historic District Commission, and the Civic Center and Historic District.

Downtown Gloucester, the so-called "heart of the city," includes a civic center core, with historic and architecturally interesting buildings. This area should be included in general downtown planning, the Site Plan and Design Review Process, and Façade Improvement Program, where it applies, in cooperation with the Historic District Commission, which has stewardship for the Historic District.

Strategy 7. Improve the Railroad Avenue railway station and adjacent area as a gateway to Downtown.

The Railroad Avenue railway station is one of several gateways to the city. Plans for the improvement of the station and the adjacent neighborhood have long been in the making. The DDC should continue to urge these improvements and work with city and state officials

to bring the plans to fruition. The DDC should aggressively pursue station façade improvement, additional parking for commuter train riders, and thematic links between the station and downtown.

Strategy 8. Create a Downtown Traffic and Parking Plan that improves accessibility and supports the vitality of the downtown area.

Cooperative effort by the DDC, City staff, and the business community should continue to seek evolving improvements to traffic movement and convenient parking in downtown. The city-wide Transportation and Access Management Plan should include a Downtown Traffic and Parking element that promotes effective locations and efficient management for parking, and improves the perception of convenience. This effort should direct employees of downtown businesses and City agencies to alternative long-term parking locations, reserving central spaces for visitors and business patrons. This effort should also include signage that directs people to appropriate locations for both long and short-term parking.

The Traffic and Parking Plan should examine methods to increase service and use of public transportation, including innovative methods of shared vehicles and service-on-demand.

Strategy 9. Seek local, regional, state and federal funding to support Main Street and Downtown improvement.

The DDC should dedicate serious effort to search for funding, and the Community Development Department and the Grants Office should continue to seek and make funds available.

III.C. VILLAGES AND NEIGHBORHOODS

To explore the villages and neighborhoods of Gloucester is to explore a rich and fascinating history. Each neighborhood has its own character and special features, and people express strong desire to maintain both.

III.C.I. RESOURCES AND TRENDS

Most of Gloucester's early villages and neighborhoods hugged the shores. Many of these unique and diverse neighborhood areas were established over three hundred years ago; a few have the look and feel of that past - the Village of Annisquam, as an example. Others have changed a great deal, yet retain a feel of their beginnings, such as Brier Neck, Eastern Point and Folly Cove.



Several Gloucester neighborhoods grew around particular industries and ethnic groups. Rocky Neck is home of the first Art Colony in the country; some of the colony remains, with art studios and galleries open in the summer, attracting residents and tourists. Restaurants and



shops add to the appeal, and mix with a dense and tightly knit residential neighborhood. Large summer homes and hotels along Bass Rocks reflect the residential tourist trade. Magnolia, too, was originally residential tourist oriented, complete with branches of New York shops on Lexington Avenue. Still a village with shops and services, Magnolia is now largely residential. The granite industry in Lanesville drew Finnish and Scandinavian immigrants, and Fort Square, on the Harbor, was home to many Italian people who came to work in the fishing industry.

Neighborhood architecture, in many cases, reflects the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the people who live there. A striking example is the "old world" design of Our Lady of Good Voyage Church, centerpiece of a neighborhood predominantly settled by Portuguese people who earned their living from the nearby sea. The densely settled in-town section of the city is suggestive of the European origins of the early residents. The Upper Parish of West Gloucester and inland sections of Lanesville maintain the rural feeling of their agricultural past.

Some areas, such as the Bass Avenue-Marina Drive neighborhood, several Magnolia neighborhoods, Wheelers Point, Riverview and Riverdale, were developed in the 1950s and 60s, feature suburban ranch style and Cape Cod type homes on uniform lots with wide setbacks.

VILLAGES AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Moderate-sized and small subdivisions have been built in the past 20 years in several locations, with heavy concentration in the West Gloucester neighborhood of Wingersheek Beach.

Recent residential development and trends have already affected the look and feel of some neighborhoods, and people have expressed strong desire to arrest the change and to preserve individual neighborhood character. Eastern Point, still elegant, has many new, large homes of varying design. Riverdale has lost some of its openness and rural character, and homes are, now, moving into the nearby wilds of Dogtown, an open space that maintains a link to the natural landscape of early Gloucester.

Residents have also voiced concerns about infill building that occurs in rock and ledge locations, many with steep slopes, requiring removal of granite in order to build homes. This type of development does not match the patterns that attracted people to their neighborhoods in the first place.

Residents have expressed a need to be informed about what is happening in their neighborhoods. They want to participate in decisions that affect their quality-of-life. This Plan recommends a new approach to planning that actively incorporates neighborhood concerns, where residents assist in decisions that affect development and help guide public services to best serve their needs. The active neighborhood associations of the past served a purpose in protecting community; this Plan envisions a rebirth of those associations for this purpose. And then, it further recommends that neighborhoods should have an official role in planning and decision-making.



Gloucester is at a major crossroads, called upon to manage growth in ways that preserve this wonderful collection of neighborhood character that has made it such a desirable place to live.

III.C.2. GOAL

Retain the character, distinct identity and comfortable scale of the individual villages and neighborhoods that are Gloucester.

III.C.3. OBJECTIVES

- Identify the patterns of use and development that distinguish the desirable qualities of each village and neighborhood.
- Ensure that future development patterns are compatible with desirable, established neighborhood qualities.

- Maintain the transitions between villages and neighborhoods so that encroaching development does not blur the distinctions between them.
- Encourage stewardship of villages and neighborhoods by involving local participants in both planning and development reviews.
- Establish policies and actions that will restore vitality to existing village centers.
- Shape new village centers where there are significant concentrations of commercial or residential uses.

III.C.4. STRATEGIES

Strategy 1. Identify predominant historic and architectural character of neighborhoods and functions of village centers.

Each neighborhood and village in Gloucester has special physical qualities that are distinctive and desirable. Identifying and listing these features would document the physical and cultural diversity of Gloucester. An inventory should record the architectural characteristics, the scale and pattern of uses, and the qualities of the streetscape and open space that are linked to each distinct neighborhood and village. The inventory should also establish the traditional density patterns that define each area, and whether there is capacity for additional development.

Patterns of development grew from the economic past and changing customs in building design, and transportation patterns. By understanding the reasons behind these patterns, their relevance to the future can be better understood, and used to shape future land use and design regulations. The inventory should be the starting point for the process that will lead to revisions in land use and zoning regulations within the neighborhoods and villages.

Strategy 2. Ensure neighborhood representation in revising standards and regulations, by encouraging roles for neighborhood associations.

Long-term stewardship of the neighborhoods and villages will depend on continued active participation of neighborhood associations and individual citizens. As site and design standards and review processes are developed, a role should be established for neighborhood input in planning, review and approval. The Planning Board and Community Development Department should develop a process to solicit opinions of local associations and citizens in planning for neighborhood and village standards that lead to revisions in zoning and subdivision regulations.

Strategy 3. Develop land management regulations to preserve village and neighborhood character.

After listing and evaluating the distinguishing characteristics of each neighborhood and village, Design and Site Review standards can be tailored and applied to each location, through the site plan and design review process led by the Planning Board and Community Development Department, and including neighborhood representation.

Standards for design, review and approval should include dimensional standards, guided by neighborhood character and natural features of the surrounding landscape. Although there may no longer be a practical need to mirror traditional development patterns, the character of the villages and neighborhoods can be diminished by new development that is strikingly different from its surroundings. Furthermore, the characteristics and community spirit that have made Gloucester a desirable place to live and work can be lost. In some locations, for example, building setbacks for new structures might match the historic pattern of houses that were set close together and close to the side of the road to provide easy access before use of the automobile encouraged scattered homes with deep setbacks. In other locations, rock outcroppings or densely planted hillcrests might be preserved to reflect the pattern that historically avoided building on difficult construction sites.

Representatives from village and neighborhood associations should be formally incorporated into the planning processes that will shape future use, amenities, and cultural resources in districts of the City. This should become a standard practice of any board, commission or committee charged with preparing a detailed plan or strategy. The City Council and the Mayor should also solicit local input in subsequent decisions that affect individual neighborhoods and villages of Gloucester.

Strategy 4. Protect the distinctions between villages and districts through land use regulations that limit "sprawl" development that would obscure the transitions from place to place.

The transitions between distinct neighborhoods and villages are also important to protect. In some areas, for example, the pleasant landscape and low density of development along a roadway marks the transition from one village to the next. If new commercial or housing uses fill all these transitions without regard to the resulting visual character or density, the traditional sense of Gloucester will be diminished.

Strategy 5. Encourage activities that build and maintain the tradition and quality-of-life in the neighborhoods through programs that expand activity in village and neighborhood centers.

In the past, neighborhood and village centers served their surrounding areas as a place to meet, to shop, or to celebrate special events. This vitality has faded in some locations, with a

loss in local identity and culture. Enlivening these centers can be encouraged, in part, by reasserting activities traditionally linked to neighborhood schools such as after-school programs for youth and adults, artists-in-residence programs at the schools, and other similar activities. Revised land use regulations should promote the viability of village and community centers, village restaurants and stores, neighborhood post offices, and other facilities and services. For example, flexibility in parking requirements in neighborhood areas may be required for some of these uses to make them viable. The Gloucester Cultural Council can also

contribute to this strategy by supporting neighborhood cultural organizations or individuals that provide programs geared to local audiences.

The Schools, the Villages and the Neighborhoods

The City, through its schools and with the cooperation of area organizations and institutions, could sponsor programs to expand the knowledge and appreciation of its constituent parts. This effort should focus on both the heritage and current contributions of its villages and neighborhoods to the rich culture of Gloucester.

Strategy 6. Encourage increased density and mixed uses in existing commercial districts, or, in selected residential locations, encourage neighborhood or village centers services and amenities.

The existing development pattern in the city includes several areas where commercial use mixes with residential. In many cases, these are low-rise developments that already serve neighborhood and city needs and are within walking distance of nearby neighborhoods. Additional services and, where appropriate, residential use could add to vitality of the center and meet other needs of the neighborhood and city. Some newly developing residential areas might benefit from carefully sited mixed-use development. Design and site development standards should guide these neighborhood additions.

Strategy 7. Monitor success in reaching neighborhood and village planning goals and objectives.

Preserving neighborhood and village identity is challenging, and the land management tools to achieve this goal are relatively new. Both successes and failures are likely to occur, and time will be required to measure progress. The Community Development Department should schedule formal reviews of progress on these particular goals and objectives on a regular basis, to allow regulations and actions to be tailored to respond to neighborhood preferences. At intervals of no less than every two years nor greater than every five years, change should be measured and forums held to discuss progress in the neighborhoods.

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